

THE RALEIGH SUPERMATIC

Centaur tests a superbly quiet luxury model from Nottingham

AS I rode the Raleigh Supermatic for the first time through dark London streets, I sought for a simile to describe its behaviour. "It runs like . . . like . . . like a sewing machine!" However ridiculous this may sound, the description does possess more than an atom of truth. For once someone has outdone the German moped manufacturers in silencing a small two-stroke engine, and without doubt the Supermatic is the quietest moped I have ever ridden. In fact, it is almost too quiet. Hemmed in by the revving engines of nearby traffic at the start of my run home, it was only the fact that the lights had gone out that told me the unwarmed engine had died.

For not only is the engine note considerably diminished, but vibration has also been cunningly reduced to a minimum. Experimentally, while I was waiting for the lights to change, I held the handlebars with the tips of my fingers. Hardly a tremor penetrated my glove. This was certainly something new. I was suspicious, and felt that if this were so at low revs. vibration would probably be excessive higher up the scale.

As I turned away from Blackfriars Bridge on to the Embankment round went the twist-grip and the Raleigh shot off down the slight incline and on to the straight flat road. The revs. rose and I felt the beginning of a tingle from the engine. "Here it comes," I thought and wound the engine on a little more. But apart from the mounting speed, nothing happened. The engine whined cosily while a minute shudder transmitted itself to the handlebars and the pedals.

A Remarkable Moped

If the Raleigh could offer nothing more than this, it would certainly be a remarkable moped. As it is, it can offer a good deal more.

The Supermatic is one of those rare mopeds, possessing both automatic clutch and dual seat. When I first rode an "automatic" moped some years ago, I never imagined that this type of clutch could be adapted to the greater stresses of carrying a passenger. As a solo mount acceleration was always the weak feature (as in fact it still is, to a certain extent, with the Supermatic) and this seemed to preclude the possibility of pulling away with an even greater weight. I am glad to see that my gloomy prophecies have turned out false. Within a few days of arrival the Supermatic had already transported a pair of my colleagues from Bowling Green Lane to Earls Court without complaint, and later it was to carry my wife and I with similar equanimity.

Standing Start

Mind you, certain provisos must be made. Possibly two light people determined to ignore the possibility of clutch wear could get away from a standing start without assistance, but I always preferred to avoid the risk and pedal. Naturally enough, because the moped is

SPECIFICATION

Engine: Raleigh RM5; 39mm. bore x 41.8m.m. stroke = 49.85c.c.; effective power 2.66 b.h.p. at 5,600 r.p.m.

Gearbox: Fully automatic clutch, 11.1 to 1 ratio min. to 19.9 to 1 max.; pedal start; lever on pulley renders engine independent of cycle.

Frame: Pressed steel construction, swinging arm rear suspension, leading link front forks.

Tank: 1½ gallon, including half-pint reserve.

Lights: Direct lighting from fly-wheel magneto generator.

Wheels and Brakes: 23.5in. x 2.25in. tyres; 4in. diam. front and rear brake, in full width alloy hubs.

Equipment: Comprehensive tool kit, pump, number plates, stand, speedometer.

Finish: Charcoal and pearl grey.
Weight: 112lb.

Manufacturers: Raleigh Industries Ltd., Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham.

Price: £74 5s. 5d. plus £16 6s. 10d. tax, total £90 12s. 6d.

Extras: Legshields £3 9s. 6d., windscreen £3 9s. 6d., panniers £2 11s. per pair.



relatively light, it is rather unstable two-up at low speeds, and there was a tendency to wobble slightly.

My criticisms of the Supermatic are twofold. The first concerns the forks, which are fitted with lengthy leading links. Springing is provided by rubber loops. The whole system might be improved and, to my mind, the front suspension of the less expensive Raleigh Automatic is superior. The Supermatic showed extreme lightness of steering when one hand was taken from the handlebars, and right turns were sometimes tricky because of it.

The only other contentious point concerns the dual seat. This is long enough but not wide enough, and consequently is rather hard.

Well Placed Bars

However, there is plenty to set against these two points. The seating position is superb and the bars come very readily to hand. After some recent experimental rides on sporting motorcycles, I found this particular fact very welcome, not only because of the increased comfort, but because they give added confidence when riding through thick traffic. With no necessity for the slightest stoop of the shoulders, fatigue is non-existent and there are no distractions to stop concentration on road conditions.

The brakes operate in full-width hubs and are operated by usefully large levers. When I took over the Supermatic there were over 800 miles on the clock yet the brakes were literally as good as new. They were more than equal to the dodging and weaving necessary in London, and used together at a constant 20 m.p.h. they brought me to a spine-jarring halt in 11½ feet. With the throttle wide open—maximum speed being in the region of 35 m.p.h. I came to rest after 34 feet.

Apart from the brakes, the whole handlebar layout was neat and unfussy. The various control cables are tidily run together in plastic tubes while an extra lever is avoided by incorporating the decompressor control on the reverse action of the twist-grip. Having wrestled in the past with a variety of badly placed stranglers or chokes, I applaud the unobtrusive yet handy control on the Supermatic.

I am not too keen about the petrol tap, however, which consists of a plastic-headed knob sticking up through the engine fairing, as I was unable to turn it on wearing mittens.

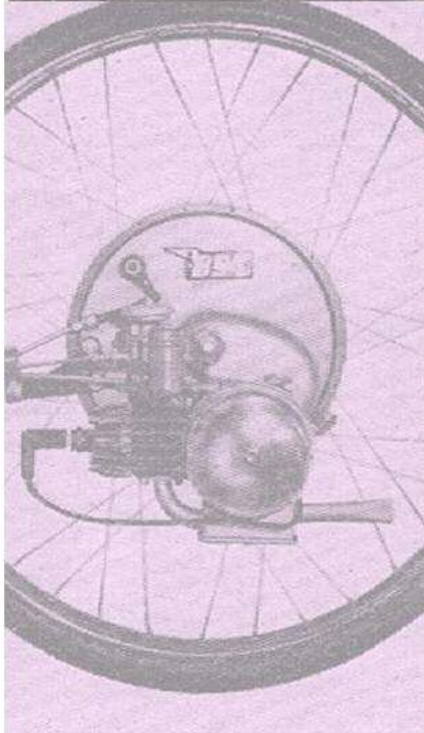
Difficulty Avoided

One of the difficulties of fitting a dual seat to a swinging rear arm machine, is the question of siting the pillion footrests. The usual solution is to place them forward, so that there is no contraction of the distance between the seat and the pillion rider's feet. On the Supermatic they have been attached by brackets to the upper (non-moving) part of the rear damper. They are thus out of the way of the rider in control, and are not affected by the movement of the rear suspension.

Finish is excellent and the tank stylishly turned out in chrome. The lighting is adequate and there is a good clear speedometer. Although it is designed for two riders, I found it an excellent solo machine. With a few extras such as a backrest on the rear of the dual seat, it would make the ideal mount for a mother with one small child.

The general styling and the thought which has gone into the design of the model are of a high standard and ensure that the Raleigh Supermatic is very definitely a moped of the 'sixties. Certainly it provided me with enjoyable and, in some ways, surprising riding, and it is well worthy of the name it bears.

IceniCAM Information Service



www.icenicam.org.uk